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Americans spying for Israel

ACCORDING to William Safire, writing in the New York Times, the two Israelis who worked with self-confessed Israeli spy Jonathan Jay Pollard (an American citizen) were both high-level Israeli government officials and bona fide Israeli heroes.

One, Rafi Eitan, is famous in Israel for having led the search for and capture of Adolf Eichmann. The other, Amiel Sella, was a colonel in the Israeli Air Force at the time he met Mr. Pollard and became Pollard's "control." He is believed to have led the 1981 Israeli air attack on the nuclear reactor in Iraq.

Mr. Eitan was at one time chief of operations of Mossad, Israel's equivalent of the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency). Colonel Sella was advanced to the rank of general and given command of a major Israeli Air Force base after his abrupt return to Israel last year.

Eitan, Sella, and two other Israelis left the United States immediately after the arrest of Pollard in front of the Israeli Embassy in Washington on Nov. 21. The four were all wanted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation for violation of American laws and were being sought when they got away. All four are accused of spying in the US for a foreign country.

The FBI sent agents to Israel on the promise of "full cooperation" in getting to the bottom of the Pollard case. US officials were allowed to interview them. According to FBI Director William H. Webster, the standably wants every possible scrap of information to be had in Washington that is of any value to Israel. Some things are supposed to be kept secret from Israel. The forbidden zone covers information the US government has been given by friendly Arab countries about their own affairs.

The other reason is that Israel does in fact get away with almost anything in its relations with the US.

On the day that the front pages of Washington newspapers headlined the self-confessed guilt of Pollard and his wife, the Senate voted on whether to allow the US to sell (not give) a small and much reduced package of weapons to Saudi Arabia. The original package proposed by President Reagan was trimmed to \$354 million to make it less objectionable to Israel. In the last round it was cut to \$265 million (chicken feed in terms of the cost of modern weapons).

The trimming turned the vote. The minimum number of votes needed to sustain the President, 34, were rounded up. But 66 senators voted against allowing American manufacturers to sell even \$265 million worth of arms to the Saudis.

Of the 24 Republicans who voted against the President on this issue, 14 are up for reelection in November. In other words, Israel can commit the unfriendly act of hiring Americans to spy on their own country without suffering loss of reflexive support in Congress.

American interviewers received "selective cooperation." Another US government official who declined to allow his name to be used said that the testimony of the four in Israel did not accord with other information obtained by the US prosecutor in the Pollard case.

The informant was quoted as saying that "there were a substantial number of differences, like night and day."

The Israeli government continued through the weekend to declare that it continues "to cooperate fully" with the US and that the Pollard affair was "unauthorized" and the result of a "rogue" operation run by Eitan without the knowledge of his superiors.

Much detail would have been made public about the spying activities of Pollard and his wife at the trial, had they stood trial. Instead they pleaded guilty. They did so on condition that they would not be sentenced to death. The fact that the case ended with a negotiated guilty plea instead of a protracted trial will presumably help to smooth over the affair. Washington reporters said over the weekend that both the White House and the State Department were doing their best to end the Pollard affair as quickly and quietly as possible.

The mere fact that highest authorities are helping to quiet it all down is in itself a partial explanation of why Israel does things like this and thinks it can get away with it.

The first reason, of course, is that Israel under-